

# Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari

مَرْضَى اللَّهِ عَنْهُ

Adapted from the Arabic by  
Sara Saleem



The following salutations are used after names:

ﷺ which is the Arabic for *sallallahu alayhi wa sallam*, meaning peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. This is always said after the name of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

ﷺ which is the Arabic for *radhiallahu anhu*, meaning may Allah be pleased with him. This is always said after the names of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

ﷺ which is the Arabic for *radhiallahu anha*, meaning may Allah be pleased with her. This is always said after the names of the female Companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.



## ABU AYYUB AL-ANSARI

### Yathrib before Islam

It was dusk and the houses of Yathrib appeared small and insignificant in the fading light. All the houses, that is, except one situated in the centre of the town which appeared to be a part of the sun itself, so radiant was the light emanating from it. Much noise and clamour rose from the house to reach the clouds in the sky, music and songs which were a delight to the ears and verses of different kinds of Arabic poetry. At that time the house was the scene of a wedding, the wedding of Malik ibn 'Ajlān's sister. Malik himself was one of the chiefs of the tribe of Khazraj in the city of Yathrib, which was in those days completely under the control of a number of Jews. These Jews ruled over Yathrib without paying heed to the laws and commandments sent for them through Musa عليه السلام. Their main leader was called Fatyun and his word was law in the city. He had issued an order that no girl should be allowed to get married without being presented to him first. Only after having defiled her honour would he allow the girl to be returned to her husband.





To make things worse, there was no one in the city at that time who dared to disobey the orders of this king. The two main tribes of the city, the Aws and the Khazraj, were weak and could muster no courage to challenge the situation. They bore in silence the tyranny of the king and suffered the injustices he inflicted upon them.

Late on this particular wedding night, Malik ibn 'Ajlan was sitting with some of his companions drinking wine and listening to singing. Suddenly his sister arose and began to dance, and the movement of her skirts uncovered her legs. Her brother Malik leapt up from his place, horrified and ashamed.

"What evil thing has afflicted you?" he shouted at her.

The bride looked at her brother, and as if wanting to increase his fury she said, "O Brother, what is going to happen to me tonight is worse than what I am doing now."

Malik understood immediately what she meant and his face grew hot and flushed with anger when he thought of his sister having to go and be at the mercy of that terrible king. But what could he, Malik, do about it? It was true that he was one of the chiefs of the tribe of Khazraj and people would point him out with awe in the streets, but what good did that do him now? How small was his position in comparison with this evil king.

While deep in these gloomy thoughts, an idea came to Malik.

"Do you have a plan?" he asked, looking at his sister.

"Yes," she said, "but tell me of yours first."

"I will enter the king's rooms with the women," he explained, "and then when they have all left and you are alone with him, I will kill the tyrant."

His sister agreed to this plan.

### **The Defeat of the Jews of Yathrib**

Malik dressed up in women's clothes to escape detection and carried out his plan with courage. After he had killed the king with his sword, Malik, with the help of his grateful sister, fled from the city. He made his way to Syria where he stayed as a guest of a man called Abu Jbaila, who was also from the tribe of Khazraj. Abu Jbaila was a close friend of King Ghassan who ruled the area, and Malik complained to him about the tyranny of the Jewish leaders in Yathrib, and that he could not return to his city because he had killed King Fatyun. Abu Jbaila was touched by the plight of the Aws and Khazraj in Yathrib and he promised not to indulge in any pleasurable activities until he had returned to these two tribes their once high status in the city of Yathrib. Abu Jbaila gathered together a huge army and set off, telling people he was going to the Yemen. On the way, he stopped at a place near Yathrib and sent for the Jewish leaders of the city, asking to meet them individually. Then he had them killed for their tyranny, one by one.



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When the rest of the Jews of the city, the weaker ones, saw what had been done to their leaders, they cowered in fear and the leaders of the Aws and Khazraj took over the reins of power in Yathrib.

### War between Aws and Khazraj

For many years, the city lived in peace and security. The inhabitants had no complaints to make of each other and harmony and friendship prevailed amongst them. However, a terrible war was about to break out which would last for over one hundred years.

It all began when a man named Ka'ab entered into an alliance with Malik ibn 'Ajlān during a stay with him in Yathrib. One day when Ka'ab was in the local market of Bani Qaynuqa, he saw a man from outside the city with a beautiful horse. This man was saying, "Let the noblest and most powerful man in Yathrib have this horse."

At this statement several men gathered there calling out names of the rich and powerful. Ka'ab added his voice to theirs, saying, "Indeed, Malik ibn 'Ajlān is truly the noblest and most powerful of people."

The stranger with the horse looked carefully around him at the assembled men and then he offered his fine steed to Ka'ab. Ka'ab took the reins of the horse, smiling gladly.



"Did I not tell you that my ally Malik ibn 'Ajlān is the best and most powerful amongst you?" he boasted.

A man called Samir from the tribe of Aws became infuriated at this behaviour and cursed Ka'ab. Luckily Ka'ab did not hear his insults and the crowd dispersed.

However, a few days later when Ka'ab was in the market, Samir came up behind him and struck him suddenly with his sword, killing him. News of the murder reached Ka'ab's ally, Malik, and he demanded from Samir's people that they hand over the killer to him. However, they denied any responsibility for the murder and instead sent over blood-money, which for an ally was half the amount for a relative. But Malik refused to accept this small amount and gradually matters became so serious that full-scale hostilities broke out between the two tribes of Aws and Khazraj. Many men were killed in this, the first of the terrible wars between the Khazraj and the Aws.

A hundred years passed, and during this time a lot of wars and massacres took place between the two tribes, victory alternating between the Aws and the Khazraj. The ill-feeling created in the hearts of the people remained constant and flared into open hostility time and time again.

### The Search for Peace

The battles raged until the day when the Prophet

Muhammad ﷺ received the first Revelation from Allah the Almighty. On that day a particularly fierce battle had been fought, in which many men had lost their lives. The elders and people of both tribes felt deeply disheartened at the futility of the killing and the wasted lives of men who were essentially brothers at heart. The elders and noblemen realised that further such enmity and feuds would only serve to undermine their own authority. Eventually, they would fall once again into the hands of the Jews, who were waiting with great anticipation to reassert their former dominance in the city. It was for these reasons that the noblemen of the two tribes of Yathrib felt that they must find a way to put an end to the bloodshed which was threatening to destroy them.

Finally, after much deliberation, they decided that they would choose a man from amongst themselves and crown him as their king; a man who would have the wisdom and authority to settle their disputes before they got out of hand. For this difficult but powerful role, the people of Yathrib chose 'Abdullah ibn Abi Salul, a man from the tribe of Khazraj. His sound opinions were respected in the city and he was a man of sharp intellect and great ability. On the day designated for his coronation, the people in Yathrib breathed sighs of relief and slept that night with great hope in their hearts.



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### Islam Comes to Yathrib

Fate, however, had something quite different in store for the people of Yathrib. During the days after the coronation, seven men from the tribe of Khazraj set out for Makkah to make the pilgrimage, as they did every year (even the non-Muslims made a pilgrimage to Makkah at that time). It was during the same days that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ began to go out to meet the caravans which came for the pilgrimage to tell them about the message of Islam. On this occasion, the Prophet ﷺ met and talked with the seven men from Yathrib. In his gentle manner he explained to them about the blessings that were bestowed upon mankind with the revelation of Islam and the benefits to be gained from it. He told them Allah had sent to them a Prophet and Messenger.

His words came as an unexpected surprise to the men and suddenly they remembered the words which the Jews of Yathrib had spoken many times; they had said that the days had come for the arrival of the Prophet of Allah.

It did not take long for the men of the tribe of Khazraj to realise that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was speaking the truth and to recognise him as the true Prophet of Allah.

One of the men addressed the Prophet ﷺ: "O Messenger of Allah, we have come from our people – the tribes of Aws and Khazraj – and, honestly speaking,

there can hardly be a people amongst whom there is such bitter hatred and rivalry. Perhaps the Almighty can bring some unity to these tribes through you, for in truth there can be no man nobler than yourself."

When the seven men returned to Yathrib, they spread the news of their meeting with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and of their conversion to the blessed religion of Islam. They then explained all that they knew about the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ and invited the people of Yathrib to accept Islam. Not long after that, by the grace of Almighty Allah, so many of the people of Yathrib had accepted Islam that there was hardly a house of the people of Aws and Khazraj whose inhabitants did not have blessings for the Prophet of Allah ﷺ on their lips and love for him in their hearts.

The time for the pilgrimage in the following year arrived, and twelve men from Aws and Khazraj went to meet the Prophet ﷺ at a place just outside Makkah, called Aqabah. Here they pledged not to associate any false gods with Allah, not to steal, commit adultery, kill their children, invent lies or disobey Allah when ordered to do good deeds. When finally the men had to take leave of the Prophet ﷺ, he told them to take with them to Yathrib Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr who would instruct them in the details of the religion and teach them the laws and regulations of Islam.

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were drawn to the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ message was a man called Khalid ibn Zaid, better known in Islamic history as Abu Ayyub al-Ansari.

Once again, the season of the pilgrimage arrived, and this time some seventy men and two women from Yathrib went to meet the Prophet ﷺ in Makkah to pledge loyalty to Islam and to talk with him. These were still the early days of Islam and special arrangements had to be made to meet the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ after night-fall just outside the city, because of the hostility of the Makkan tribe of Quraysh. When the people from Yathrib and the Prophet ﷺ sat down to talk, they found that they had a great deal to discuss. They invited him and the Muslims of Makkah to come to Yathrib, and offered him their protection against his enemies. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ accepted their offer on behalf of the Muslims and they extended their hands to seal their alliance with him. Abu Ayyub placed his hands on the hand of the Prophet ﷺ and the agreement was sealed in the best possible way.

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So the *Ansar*, intrigued, let the camel make its way through the city, each of them secretly hoping that it would stop outside their house and that they would have the great honour of having the Prophet ﷺ as a guest in their home. As the haughty camel plodded through the streets, people called out to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, "Stop here, O Messenger of Allah! You will stay in the utmost comfort..." But the Messenger of Allah ﷺ again replied, "Let her go on her way, for she has been instructed. She will stop where Allah has intended me to descend."

The camel went on its way calmly, without haste, as if it was fully aware that it was the centre of attention and all eyes were upon it. As it passed by a wall belonging to two young orphan boys named Sahl and Suhayl of the Bani Najjar, the camel knelt down for a while, but the Prophet ﷺ did not descend. It lingered by the wall for a few moments, then got up and walked a few steps before returning to the wall. As all eyes watched the camel's every move, it moved in a circle near the wall before spotting a small, insignificant house next to the wall where it knelt and finally came to a halt. Seeing this amazing occurrence, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari made his way through the massed crowd and greeted the Prophet ﷺ and asked him to enter the humble house which belonged to him.

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Downstairs, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ asked about the wall in front of which his camel had paused, and he was told that it belonged to two orphans, Sahl and Subayl. The two boys were sent for, and the Prophet ﷺ asked them if they would sell him the wall and the land that went with it so that he could build upon it the first masjid especially constructed for the Muslims. The two boys wanted to give it to the Prophet ﷺ as a free gift, but he insisted on paying them, although he appreciated their devotion. He then gave instructions for the first masjid to be built upon it.

Later on, Abu Ayyub showed the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ upstairs to the room which had been arranged for him with great care. But, to Abu Ayyub's great surprise, his guest insisted on sleeping downstairs, absolutely refusing to turn Abu Ayyub and his wife out of their room, in spite of their protests. So that night, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ slept downstairs while his

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The second night was even worse. After managing to sleep for only a few hours, Abu Ayyub suddenly woke up and began to pace the room, awakening his wife in his agitation.

"Do you realise that we are walking on the Messenger of Allah's head?" he whispered.

He then found a corner of the room in which to curl up, and he was determined to spend the rest of the night in it. However, sleep was not in Abu Ayyub's fate that night, for as he settled into the corner he broke a jar of water. Both he and his wife rushed to mop it up, terrified lest the water trickle down through the roof and awake Allah's Messenger ﷺ.

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He then found a corner of the room in which to curl up, and he was determined to spend the rest of the night in it. However, sleep was not in Abu Ayyub's fate that night, for as he settled into the corner he broke a jar of water. Both he and his wife rushed to mop it up, terrified lest the water trickle down through the roof and awake Allah's Messenger ﷺ.

The following morning, Abu Ayyub protested to the Prophet ﷺ that it really was not possible for him to sleep upstairs any longer. The Prophet ﷺ at first insisted that



the house. Then he called hastily to his wife, asking her to make the house as presentable as possible for the Prophet ﷺ. While Abu Ayyub proudly ushered the Prophet ﷺ into his humble house, Umm Ayyub stood stunned at this news, as if she were frozen to the spot, trying to digest its contents. In her wildest dreams she could not have imagined that Allah the Almighty would answer her prayers thus, and she thanked Him profusely for this blessing. When she finally composed herself, she rushed upstairs to prepare the largest room for him as best she could.

Downstairs, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ asked about the wall in front of which his camel had paused, and he was told that it belonged to two orphans, Sahl and Suhayl. The two boys were sent for, and the Prophet ﷺ asked them if they would sell him the wall and the land that went with it so that he could build upon it the first masjid especially constructed for the Muslims. The two boys wanted to give it to the Prophet ﷺ as a free gift, but he insisted on paying them, although he appreciated their devotion. He then gave instructions for the first masjid to be built upon it.

Later on, Abu Ayyub showed the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ upstairs to the room which had been arranged for him with great care. But, to Abu Ayyub's great surprise, his guest insisted on sleeping downstairs, absolutely refusing to turn Abu Ayyub and his wife out of their room, in spite of their protests. So that night, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ slept downstairs while his

hosts stayed in their room above. Abu Ayyub spent most of the night tossing and turning, unable to sleep knowing that he was sleeping above the Prophet of Allah ﷺ. In the early hours of the morning he got up and prepared breakfast for his noble guest, which he then took to him.

"How did you sleep, O Abu Ayyub?" enquired the Prophet ﷺ.

"How do you think, when below me was the Messenger of Allah and above me was Allah the Almighty?" he asked, in a miserable voice.

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Such was the love and devotion of Abu Ayyub for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he would wait for him to finish the food he sent for him, and if there was any left he would finish it himself, putting his fingers in the marks left by those of the Prophet ﷺ. One day Umm Ayyub prepared a dish which contained onions and garlic. Later on when Abu Ayyub asked if the Prophet ﷺ had enjoyed the meal, his wife told him that he had not touched the food at all. Abu Ayyub grew worried lest the Prophet ﷺ was in some way angry with him, and rushed to see him. The Prophet ﷺ, however, explained that he had not touched the food because there was a smell of onions and garlic.

"Is this Haram, O Messenger of Allah?" asked Abu Ayyub.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ replied that it was not unlawful, but that he found it displeasing nevertheless, and that Abu Ayyub was to feel free to eat it. However, Abu Ayyub immediately replied, "Well then, what is displeasing to you is also displeasing to me, O Messenger of Allah."

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"May you never be afflicted with anything bad, O Abu Ayyub," he said, smiling.

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Abu Ayyub took Mus'ab to his house and made him feel very welcome. The two men lived in the same house as real brothers in Islam, while Abu Ayyub took every opportunity to make sure that Mus'ab was comfortable in his home, on occasions even giving up his own food without letting Mus'ab know, so that he would not go hungry.

Meanwhile, work on the masjid was going on and the many companions and friends of the Prophet ﷺ were working hard together to get it completed. The Prophet



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ﷺ himself had been the first to start the work and this sight inspired the others so much that they redoubled their efforts joyfully. Together the *Ansar* and the *Muhajirun* made the bricks and built the walls and the roof, shoulder to shoulder chanting verses of poetry they made up to encourage themselves. Abu Ayyub was at the forefront of the workers, who were carrying heavy bricks on their shoulders.

After a short time, the great moment arrived when the Prophet's ﷺ masjid was completed. When this happened, the Prophet ﷺ moved into his apartment there, after having stayed with Abu Ayyub and brought blessings to his house for over a month. But although he had moved into his own home, the Prophet ﷺ still found the time to come often and visit Abu Ayyub and share with him whatever food was offered. On one of these occasions, the Prophet ﷺ brought with him his friend Abu Bakr ؓ, who was greeted with the traditional warmth and hospitality of Abu Ayyub. When the food was cooked and brought before them, the Prophet ﷺ suddenly said, "O Abu Ayyub, go and invite thirty of the noblemen of the *Ansar* to have dinner with us."

The truth was that the food at that moment in front of the guests was the sum total of all the food which Abu Ayyub had in the house and he felt a little embarrassed to let the Prophet ﷺ know this. The Prophet ﷺ still requested him to call them, so Abu Ayyub could do nothing but obey. He went out to call the guests, slightly confused at what would happen.

When the men arrived, they formed a group around the Prophet ﷺ and helped themselves to the food which he offered them. After eating their fill, talking and relaxing, they took their leave. Then Abu Ayyub looked at the food and there it was, just as it was before anyone started eating. Abu Ayyub wanted to say something, but before he could, the Prophet ﷺ spoke.

"Go and invite sixty of the honourable men of the *Ansar*."

So once again, Abu Ayyub went out and did as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had asked. After this second group had eaten their fill and left, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked Abu Ayyub to bring an even larger number of men. The same thing happened; they came, ate and went, and when Abu Ayyub looked at the food it was still there, just as before. Abu Ayyub realised that this was one of the occasions on which something like a miracle had taken place inside his house because of the presence of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

It was usual for the Prophet ﷺ to visit Abu Ayyub's house in the mornings to drink a glass of fresh milk which he would prepare out of love for him. One such morning, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was late and Abu Ayyub realised that he would probably not be able to make it, so he gave the milk to his wife to drink.

The time came for the *Dhuhr* (midday) prayer and people went to the masjid for prayers. When they poured out of the masjid, many felt very sleepy because the day



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"Nothing but the hunger in my stomach," he replied.

At this, 'Umar ؓ laughed and said that he too was afflicted with the same problem. A few moments later, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came up to them both and asked them what they were doing there. When they told him, he too laughed.

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The two men stood up and started walking with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who then remembered that he had not visited Abu Ayyub that morning. He then suggested that they go and see him.

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bread prepared by Umm Ayyub, was ready in less than an hour. The Prophet ﷺ and his two companions appreciated it greatly. The Prophet ﷺ then suggested to Abu Ayyub that he take some of the food to his daughter Fatima who had not eaten such food for many days. Abu Ayyub gladly sent the food to Fatima and then returned to his guests. As the Prophet ﷺ was leaving, he told his host to come to his house the following day.

When Abu Ayyub went to meet the Prophet ﷺ the next day, he was presented with a serving maid.

"O Abu Ayyub," said the Prophet ﷺ, "Look after her well, for we have known only good from her as long as she has been with us."

Abu Ayyub took the girl to his house and after a little while he thought, "I don't know any better way to treat her than by setting her free."

So he set her free, an act he knew would please the Prophet ﷺ.

The following incident illustrates the faith of Abu Ayyub and his wife in the Prophet ﷺ and his wife 'A'isha ؓ, which earned them a mention in the immortal Qur'an, the best thing they could ever wish for. It concerns the terrible accusations which were being made against 'A'isha ؓ and a young man named Safwan, after the campaign against Bani Mustaliq. These accusations were being spread by hypocritical people and were



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bread prepared by Umm Ayyub, was ready in less than an hour. The Prophet ﷺ and his two companions appreciated it greatly. The Prophet ﷺ then suggested to Abu Ayyub that he take some of the food to his daughter Fatima who had not eaten such food for many days. Abu Ayyub gladly sent the food to Fatima and then returned to his guests. As the Prophet ﷺ was leaving, he told his host to come to his house the following day.

When Abu Ayyub went to meet the Prophet ﷺ the next day, he was presented with a serving maid.

"O Abu Ayyub," said the Prophet ﷺ, "Look after her well, for we have known only good from her as long as she has been with us."

Abu Ayyub took the girl to his house and after a little while he thought, "I don't know any better way to treat her than by setting her free."

So he set her free, an act he knew would please the Prophet ﷺ.

The following incident illustrates the faith of Abu Ayyub and his wife in the Prophet ﷺ and his wife 'A'isha ؓ, which earned them a mention in the immortal Qur'an, the best thing they could ever wish for. It concerns the terrible accusations which were being made against 'A'isha ؓ and a young man named Safwan, after the campaign against Bani Mustaliq. These accusations were being spread by hypocritical people and were



was intensely hot. It so happened that when 'Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ came out of the masjid's courtyard, he saw Abu Bakr ؓ sitting on his own in the midday heat.

"What brings you here at such an hour, O Abu Bakr?" he asked, in amazement.

"Nothing but the hunger in my stomach," he replied.

At this, 'Umar ؓ laughed and said that he too was afflicted with the same problem. A few moments later, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came up to them both and asked them what they were doing there. When they told him, he too laughed.

"Why, I too have that problem," he said.

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In these few words Abu Ayyub had declared his confidence in her innocence and in the purity of the beloved wife of the Prophet of Allah ﷺ. And not long afterwards, the Divine verses were revealed to the Prophet ﷺ stating the innocence of 'A'isha ؓ, and mentioning the believing men and women who had been sure that the accusation was a clear lie.

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Abu Ayyub was deeply affected by the senseless deception to which the Prophet ﷺ had almost fallen a victim. He made up his mind that from that day on, he would personally take on the duty of guarding the Prophet ﷺ, especially from the Jewish people whom he now knew without doubt to be treacherous and harbouring ill-feelings.

It so happened that around this time the marriage took place between the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and Safiya bint Hayy, a prisoner of Khaybar and one of the noblest women of her time. Abu Ayyub, who was not acquainted with her exemplary character, feared lest she harboured in her heart any ill-feelings. He therefore kept guard over the tent in which she stayed with the Prophet ﷺ. He was prepared to sacrifice his life to protect the Prophet ﷺ, and he stood sword in hand by the tent all night, which passed uneventfully.



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"I feared for your safety from that lady, for we have killed her father, her husband and her people, and she was recently an unbeliever."

The Prophet ﷺ was pleased with Abu Ayyub's concern, and his joy showed visibly on his face as he prayed for Abu Ayyub, saying, "O Allah, take care of Abu Ayyub, as he has spent the night taking care of me."

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari was not only a very considerate and caring man, but also one who lived to fight in the Way of Allah, and he accompanied the Prophet ﷺ on his campaigns, as did many of the companions. After the death of the Prophet ﷺ, Abu Ayyub also participated in the campaigns against the apostates, who renounced Islam during the Khilafah of Abu Bakr ﷺ. Later on, during the Khilafah of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ, he joined in the conquests of Persia and Syria. In fact, Abu Ayyub continued fighting until he was quite an old man in his eighties, and even took part in one of the battles for Constantinople, as Istanbul was then called.

#### 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ﷺ and the Kharijites

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ﷺ were greater than those of Mu'awiya.

As the battle raged on, it became clear to some of the men in Mu'awiya's camp that victory for the other army was imminent. Indeed, as one of 'Ali's ﷺ commanders, Al-Ashtar, advanced deeper and deeper into enemy lines, he also realised that victory was only a few steps away.

'Amr ibn al-As who was fighting under Mu'awiya, rushed to him and laid before him a plan which he hoped would split the army of 'Ali ﷺ in two and save his own army. He told Mu'awiya that his soldiers should be ordered to raise up pages of the Holy Qur'an as they went into battle and say, "Let this arbitrate between us and between you!"

He expected that this would make a group of men agree to the arbitration, while another group would want to continue fighting, thus creating a rift in the army of the Khalifah 'Ali ﷺ. Mu'awiya approved of 'Amr's plan and the soldiers were ordered to raise copies of the Holy Qur'an on their spears.

So thus it was that the army of Mu'awiya, on the point of defeat, confronted 'Ali's ﷺ army. Many soldiers, including a large contingent from Iraq, refused to continue fighting when faced with the copies of the Holy Qur'an, despite 'Ali's ﷺ attempts to convince them that it was a deception and a conspiracy.

One unfortunate result of this deception was that a large group of men from 'Ali's ﷺ camp, angered by the

recourse to arbitration, left 'Ali ﷺ altogether and set up their own camp at a place called Harura. Their numbers eventually grew to around twelve thousand. The name by which they called themselves was the Kharijites. When 'Ali ﷺ sent messengers to them to try to reconcile their differences, they had a long talk about whether accepting arbitration was justified in the Holy Qur'an, but eventually the Kharijites sent word to 'Ali ﷺ that he should first admit that he was wrong to have accepted arbitration. Only after that would they return to join ranks with him. Throughout the whole terrible episode, Abu Ayyub was serving in the army of the Khalifah, watching the dissension which was tearing at the unity of the Muslim community. He tried to keep away from the feuding and prayed that he would not also be among those who caused it.

After some time the Kharijites moved from Harura to Nahrawan. After a few days there, they saw a man approaching, leading a donkey upon which a pregnant woman was sitting. They asked him who he was.

"I am 'Abdullah ibn Khabbab, companion of the Messenger of Allah," he replied.

"Tell us a saying of the Messenger of Allah which your father narrated to you, so that it might be of some use to us," they said.

He told them a saying of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, and then they asked him about the Khulafa' Abu Bakr ﷺ, 'Umar ﷺ, 'Uthman ﷺ and 'Ali ﷺ. He praised them all, so



ﷺ were greater than those of Mu'awiya.

As the battle raged on, it became clear to some of the men in Mu'awiya's camp that victory for the other army was imminent. Indeed, as one of 'Ali's ﷺ commanders, Al-Ashtar, advanced deeper and deeper into enemy lines, he also realised that victory was only a few steps away.

'Amr ibn al-As who was fighting under Mu'awiya, rushed to him and laid before him a plan which he hoped would split the army of 'Ali ﷺ in two and save his own army. He told Mu'awiya that his soldiers should be ordered to raise up pages of the Holy Qur'an as they went into battle and say, "Let this arbitrate between us and between you!"

He expected that this would make a group of men agree to the arbitration, while another group would want to continue fighting, thus creating a rift in the army of the Khalifah 'Ali ﷺ. Mu'awiya approved of 'Amr's plan and the soldiers were ordered to raise copies of the Holy Qur'an on their spears.

So thus it was that the army of Mu'awiya, on the point of defeat, confronted 'Ali's ﷺ army. Many soldiers, including a large contingent from Iraq, refused to continue fighting when faced with the copies of the Holy Qur'an, despite 'Ali's ﷺ attempts to convince them that it was a deception and a conspiracy.

One unfortunate result of this deception was that a large group of men from 'Ali's ﷺ camp, angered by the

recourse to arbitration, left 'Ali ﷺ altogether and set up their own camp at a place called Harura. Their numbers eventually grew to around twelve thousand. The name by which they called themselves was the Kharijites. When 'Ali ﷺ sent messengers to them to try to reconcile their differences, they had a long talk about whether accepting arbitration was justified in the Holy Qur'an, but eventually the Kharijites sent word to 'Ali ﷺ that he should first admit that he was wrong to have accepted arbitration. Only after that would they return to join ranks with him. Throughout the whole terrible episode, Abu Ayyub was serving in the army of the Khalifah, watching the dissension which was tearing at the unity of the Muslim community. He tried to keep away from the feuding and prayed that he would not also be among those who caused it.

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As Abu Ayyub sat and watched the army of the Khalifah departing, he thought back to his time with the Prophet of Allah ﷺ, and in particular to some of his sayings which seemed to predict the dissension which had befallen the Muslim community. He remembered that the Prophet ﷺ had once said,

"There will come out (leave) from my nation a group...with foolish dreams; when they speak it is as if they are the best of creation; when you meet them kill them, for in their killing is a reward on the Day of Judgement from Allah."

Abu Ayyub remembered this and other sayings in which the Prophet ﷺ mentioned a group of people who would spread discord, and despite his sixty or more years, he made up his mind to go and join the battle against the Kharijites.

Before the battle began, the Khalifah 'Ali ﷺ made a

last attempt to bring the rebels back to the main group so that there could be peace, but the Kharijites refused. Abu Ayyub then himself went to the Kharijites as a mediator and called them to make peace and unite with the Khalifah.

"O Servants of Allah," he said to them, "You and I are on the same level as we were before, there is no difference between us, so let us not kill each other."

But they would not listen to him, and sent back an insolent reply, full of arrogance. So the Khalifah 'Ali ﷺ arranged his army, with Hajar ibn Addiy on the right flank and Shabt ibn Ramiy on the left. On a large and powerful Persian horse sat Abu Ayyub. Then, as the fighting began, someone gave Abu Ayyub the flag of Islam, and as he held it high, he called to the Kharijites, "Whosoever comes under this flag, he is safe, and whoever goes to Kufa or any other town, he is also safe. We have no need to kill our brothers or to shed blood." (Kufa was the capital of the Muslim World at that time and is in modern-day Iraq.)

Many of the Kharijites responded to Abu Ayyub's call and escaped to Kufa and to other cities. In this way, Abu Ayyub played a very important role in this war of dissension, as a messenger of peace. In the Battle of Nahrawan itself, which was a very fierce encounter, Abu Ayyub was at the centre of the fighting on his sturdy steed. During the battle he saw one of the leaders of the Kharijites, Zaid ibn Husain al-Ta'iy, causing many casualties among the Muslims. Abu Ayyub rushed to



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After he killed this man who had been a leader of the Kharijites, the enthusiasm among the rest of the Kharijites weakened and their hearts were filled with fear. The army of the Khalifah 'Ali ؑ took advantage of their fear and inflicted upon them a decisive defeat in which many of them were killed. Many other Kharijites escaped, but of the companions of 'Ali ؑ, only seven were killed.

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"Who is at the door?" called out 'Abdullah.

"It is I, Khalid ibn Zaid, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari," came back the reply.

Immediately, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas was on his feet and opening the door. The two old friends embraced and 'Abdullah welcomed Abu Ayyub with all the traditional hospitality that is to be found in the Muslim world.

'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas remembered how Abu Ayyub had welcomed the Prophet of Allah ﷺ into his home after his emigration from Makkah, and how he had done all he could to make sure the Prophet ﷺ was comfortable.

"O Abu Ayyub," said 'Abdullah, "You honoured the Messenger of Allah when he came as a guest to you, and now I am leaving this house free for you, as you left yours for the Messenger. Everything in my house is at your disposal."

Abu Ayyub remained for some time in Basra, and when he was about to leave, he was given a gift of twenty thousand dirhams and fourteen servants. The servants were all freed immediately, and Abu Ayyub spent the money on the poor and needy.

It was the fortieth year after the *Hijrah*, and some eight months had passed leading to the middle of the month of Ramadan, when the whole of the Arabian Peninsula and the Muslim world was shaken with the terrible news. The Khalifah 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ؑ had



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Abu Ayyub remained for some time in Basra, and when he was about to leave, he was given a gift of twenty thousand dirhams and fourteen servants. The servants were all freed immediately, and Abu Ayyub spent the money on the poor and needy.

It was the fortieth year after the *Hijrah*, and some eight months had passed leading to the middle of the month of Ramadan, when the whole of the Arabian Peninsula and the Muslim world was shaken with the terrible news. The Khalifah 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ؑ had





been murdered. The assassin was Ibn Muljim al-Khariji, one of the Kharijites. When the news reached Abu Ayyub, he was deeply saddened because he had really loved 'Ali ؑ and considered him to be one of the finest of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ.

When 'Ali's son Hassan gave up his claims to the Khilafah in order to prevent disunity and to avert bloodshed among the Muslims, Mu'awiya became the next leader.

#### Abu Ayyub in Old Age

It was during the Khilafah of Mu'awiya that the Muslims made their second attempt to capture the Byzantine city of Constantinople, today known as Istanbul. Soon after the first army had been sent off, news came back that many of the soldiers were starving and others were dying of disease. Mu'awiya decided to send a second army to back up the first and called on men to come forward to fight. Abu Ayyub al-Ansari was by that time an old man in his eighties, but when he heard of the preparations of the second army, he could not help remembering the many places in the Holy Qur'an in which Muslims are encouraged to struggle in the Way of Allah. He reasoned with himself that he had no excuse not to fight, so he took down his sword and went to put his name down to fight in the second army.

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"O Allah, forgive him and let him recover," said one of them.

But Abu Ayyub heard him and said, "Do not say that. Instead say: 'O Allah, if his end is near, then forgive him and have mercy upon him...and if (death) still has some time to come, then forgive him and make him well and reward him.'"

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There are no exact dates for Abu Ayyub's death, except that it was in the year 51AH (51 years after the Hijrah), when he was around eighty years old.

The Muslim army, unable to capture the city of Constantinople on this occasion, returned home. Meanwhile, the people of the city became curious about the man who had been buried outside their walls, and they went out to see the grave. Not long afterwards, they built a huge cover over the grave and placed four candles inside. Many of them would visit it, in the hope of deriving some blessings.

Several more attempts were made by the Muslims in the years which followed to capture Constantinople, and during these years the burial place of Abu Ayyub became forgotten and neglected by the city's inhabitants.

Many, many years later, in the year 857AH, the ruler Sultan Muhammad II also had the ambition to make Constantinople an Islamic city. He prepared an army of some two hundred and fifty thousand of the best soldiers around and equipped them with the most up to date weaponry. He also took with him many religious leaders, scholars and pious men to encourage the soldiers in their fight. One day, before the fighting began, Wazir Ahmad Pasha Waliuddin was sitting with the much respected and pious old man, Shamsuddin, when suddenly the old man laughed and said, "Let me give you the good tidings of victory. If Allah wills, this year Constantinople will fall to the Muslims at the time of noon, and at that moment you will be standing at the side of Sultan Muhammad."



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Shahid Basha went immediately to the Sultan and told him of the old Sheikh's vision of good news.

The Muslim armies besieged the walled city for two months, during which some of the fiercest battles ever witnessed took place. At last the day came which had been mentioned in the prophecy of the Sheikh, which was a Wednesday in the middle of Jumada al-Thani in the year 873 H. On this day, Sultan Muhammad III entered Constantinople and praised Allah, praying in the Church of Ayra Sofra. Then he called for Sheikh Shamsuddin and asked him to take him to the burial place of the great companion Abu Ayyub al-Ansari. When the spot of Abu Ayyub's grave was located, Sultan Muhammad went with a group of noble and distinguished Ulama. The Sultan asked if there were not some distinguishing features which marked the grave, so a few men began to dig around it to see if anything could be found. Eventually an old slab of marble was dug up, on which some words were written which, when deciphered, read:

"This is the grave of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, may Allah be pleased with him."

The Sultan was deeply moved at this sight and sat by the grave for a long while. Later on, he decreed that a huge mosque be built next to the grave, from which there sprang up a school for Islamic instruction, which included lessons on the noble companions of the Prophet of Allah one of the best of whom was Abu Ayyub al-Ansari ؓ.



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

It was at the house of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ first stayed when he emigrated to Madinah. This is a concise biography of this well-known Companion who was known for the great love of the Prophet ﷺ. Recommended for ages 8 and over.



Eyup Sultan Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey